



28 December 2005

**SAFETY ALERT: POV Operation**  
**One Soldier Killed, Two Injured in Pre-Holiday Crash**

1. I hope you are enjoying the holidays and in many cases taking a well-deserved break. Carmen and I would like to send our very best wishes to all leaders, Soldiers, civilians, contractors, and family members in the Army in Europe. We especially thank those who are separated by deployment from their loved ones at this time of year. I look forward to working with you in the upcoming year.

2. Unfortunately, the joy of the holiday season has been diminished by yet another POV tragedy. Three Soldiers who were on their way to the airport for holiday leave were injured when their vehicle rear-ended a truck in slow-moving traffic. The two Soldiers who were in the front seat had to be transported to a hospital by helicopter. One of them has since died from the severe head injuries he suffered in the crash, and the other remains in very serious condition. The third Soldier, who was in the back seat, received minor injuries.

3. I will release information about the specific lessons learned (AE Reg 385-40) from this crash after the investigation is completed. In the meantime, we must consider what we can do to prevent crashes such as these, both on and off duty.

- **Time Management and “Backward Planning.”** We have enough tools and knowledge to help us identify and assess traffic risks and take action to reduce those risks. The USAREUR homepage and the USAREUR G3 website provide current information on weather and road conditions. Those who plan to travel should use these tools to assess the risks associated with their trip and allow enough travel time to compensate for delays, inclement weather, and traffic. Violating the planned schedule significantly raises the travel risk.

- **Driving in Inclement Weather.** Weather in central Europe changes frequently. Travelers can expect to face ice, rain, snowstorms, and spots of dense fog. Speed limits are established for ideal road conditions. When road conditions are poor, drivers must lower their speed and increase their following distance to allow time to recognize and react to road hazards without losing control of the vehicle. Braking on wet or icy pavement is extremely hazardous and can triple the stopping distance.

- **Maintaining Situational Awareness.** Situational awareness means being alert and concentrating on the task at hand. Drivers should start their trip refreshed, eliminate distractions, and remain alert so they can react to hazards caused by other, less-attentive drivers.

4. Army in Europe Command Policy Letter 3 and *Under the Oak Tree* counseling remain in effect. Leaders must continue to ask tough questions, remain engaged with their Soldiers, and know their Soldiers' off-duty activities. *No Loss of Life* is our goal. Let us do all we can to reach this goal in the new year.

DAVID D. McKIERNAN  
General, USA  
Commanding

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